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(54) **IMAGE FORMING APPARATUS INCLUDING TONER RECEIVER**

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G03G 21/00 (2006.01)
G03G 15/08 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **399/98**; 399/258

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 399/98, 99, 258, 262
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

According to one embodiment, a toner receiver includes a tray that is located below a path through which a supply port of a supply container passes if the supply container mounted to a main body is removed from the main body, and includes a first surface close to the supply port and a toner sump recessed from the first surface; and a toner guard that includes an upper surface including a same height as the first surface and causes toner spilled from the supply port to pass from the first surface to the toner sump.

18 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets

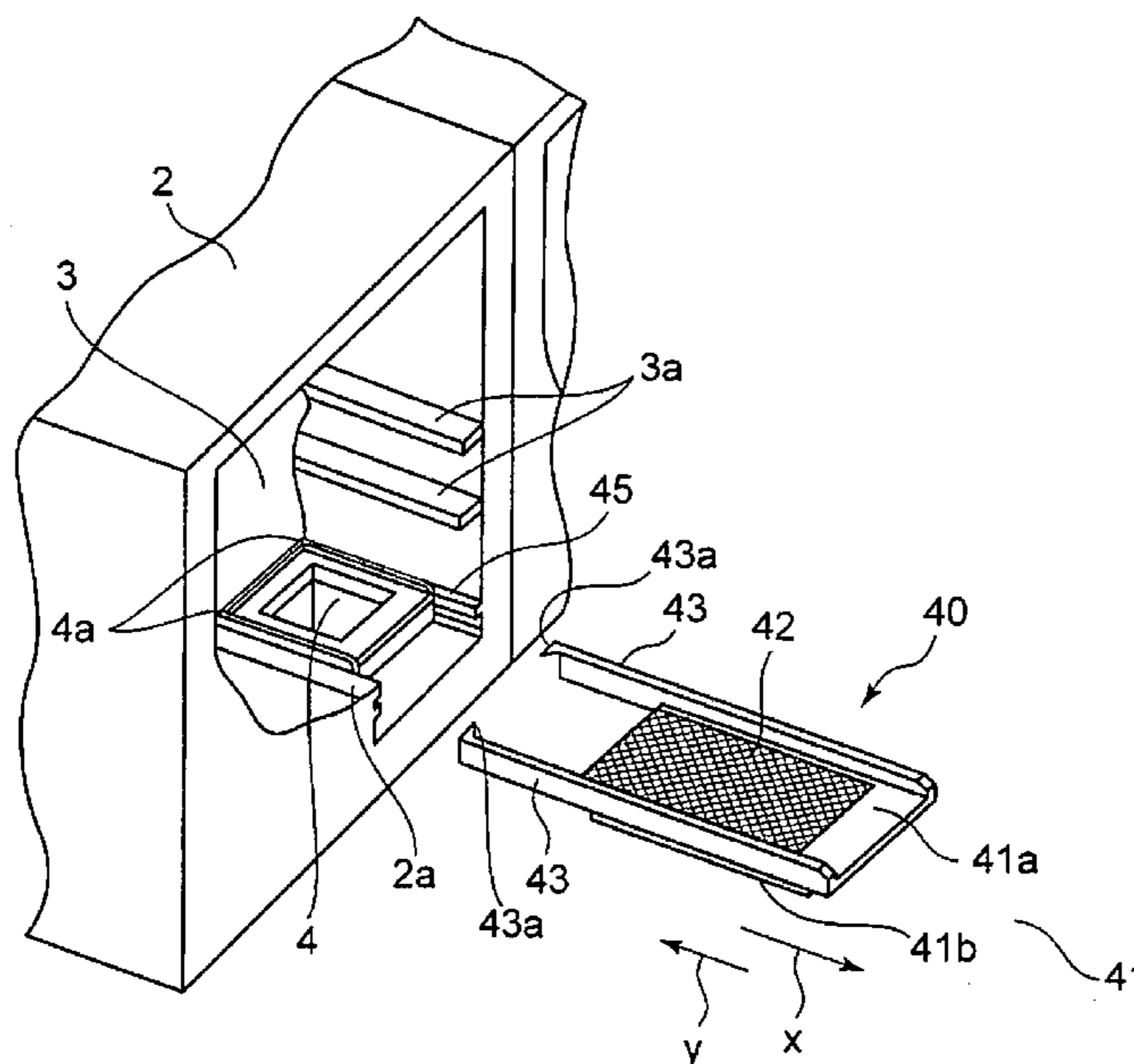


FIG. 4

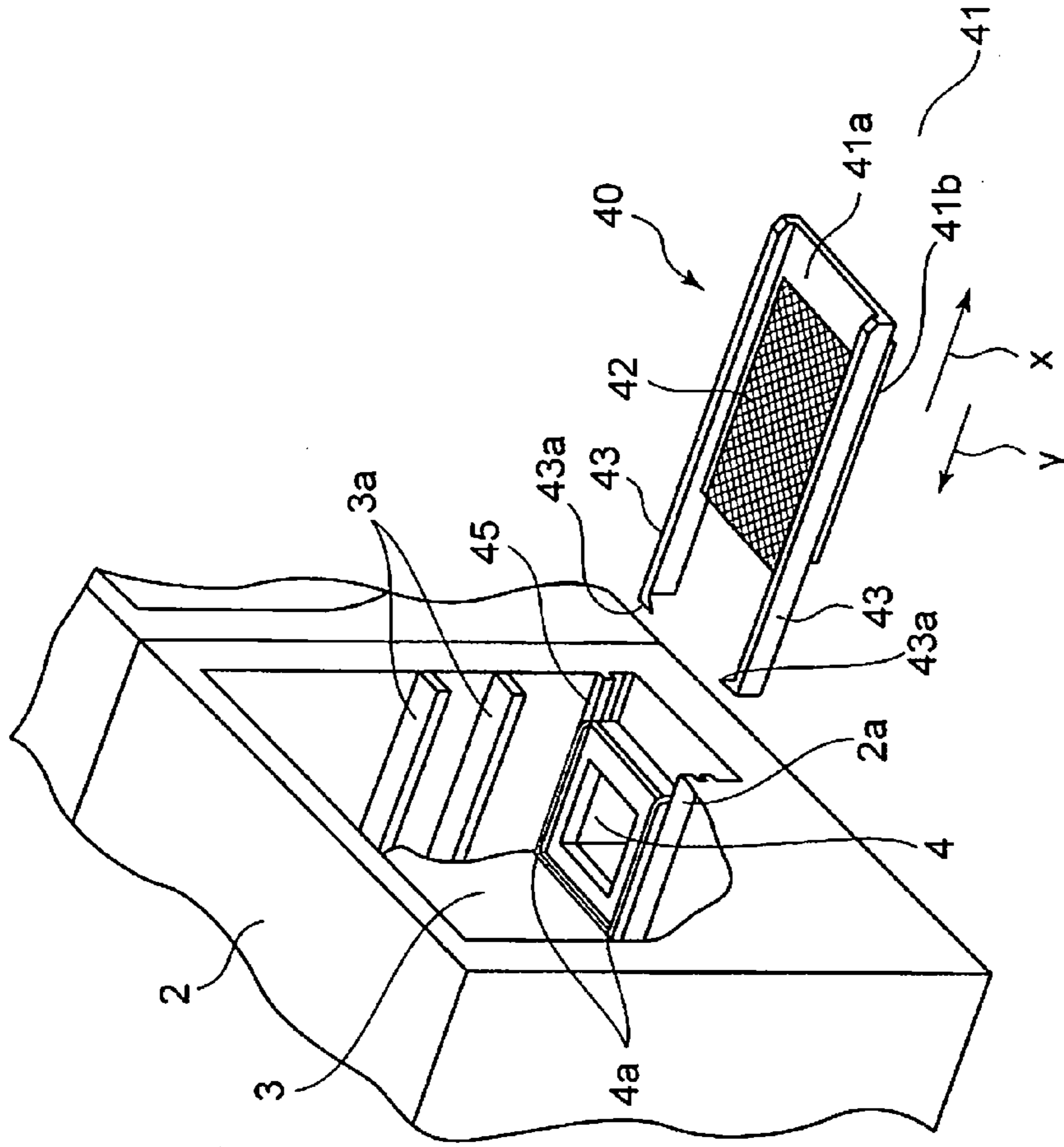


FIG. 3

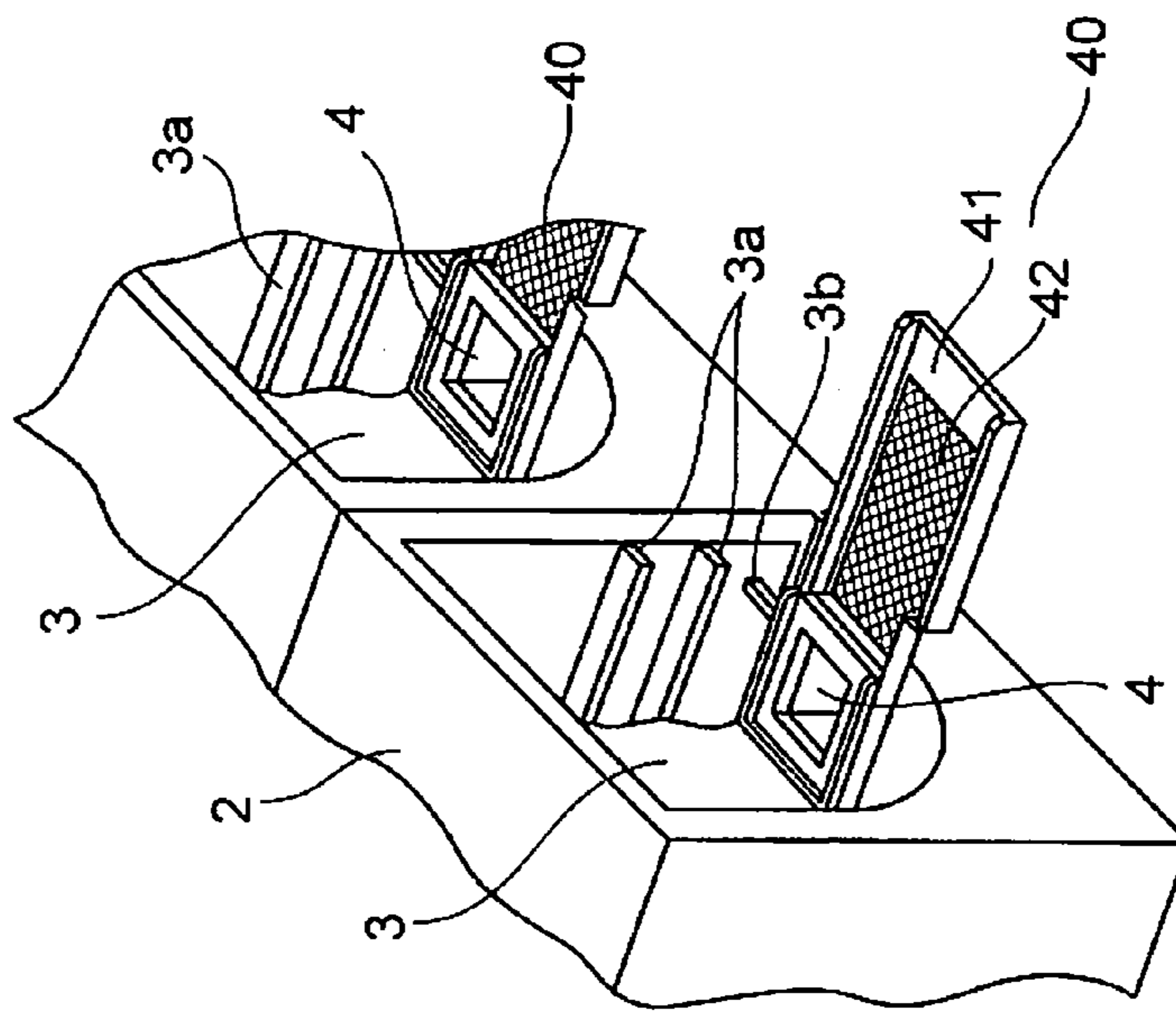


FIG. 5

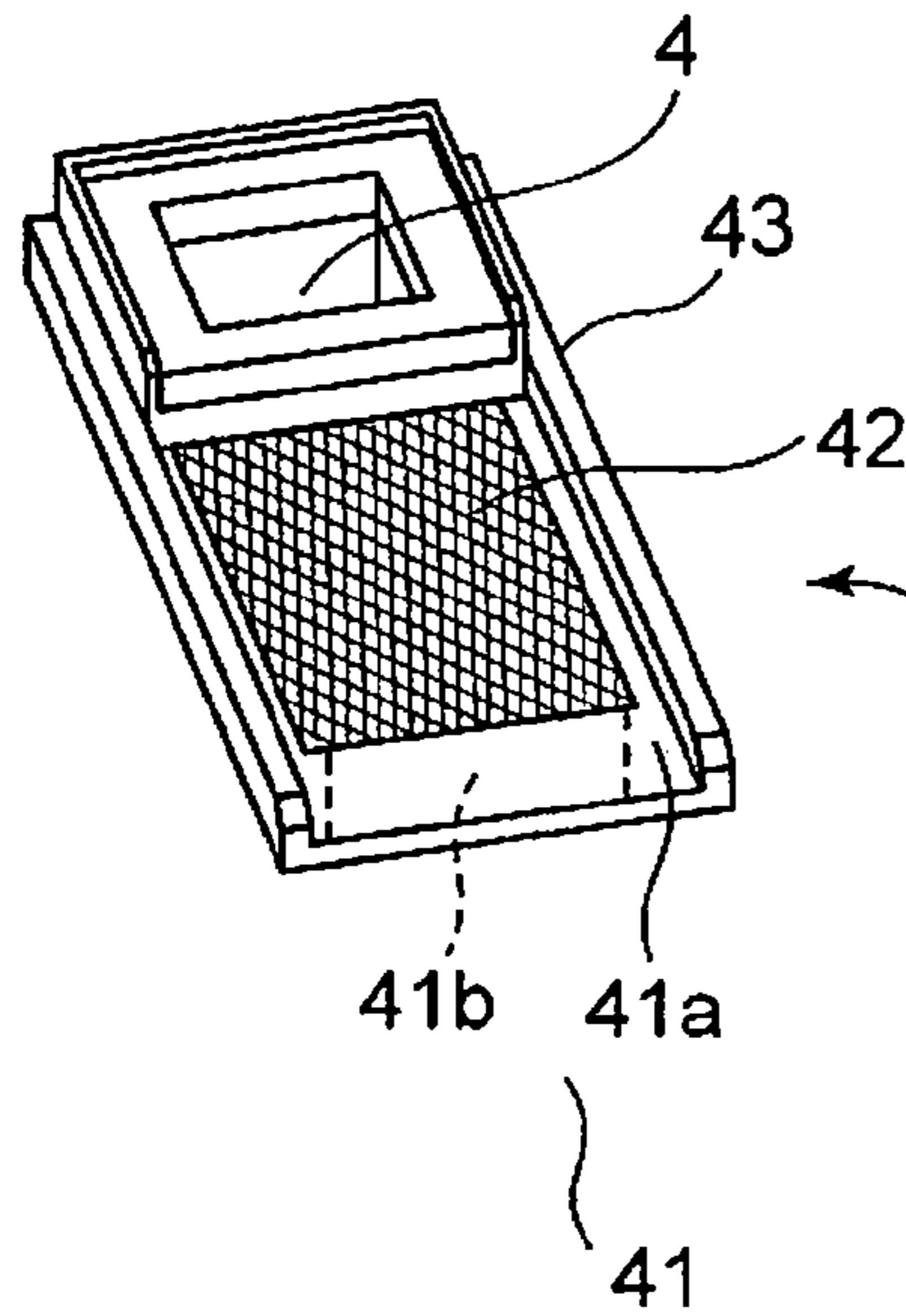


FIG. 6

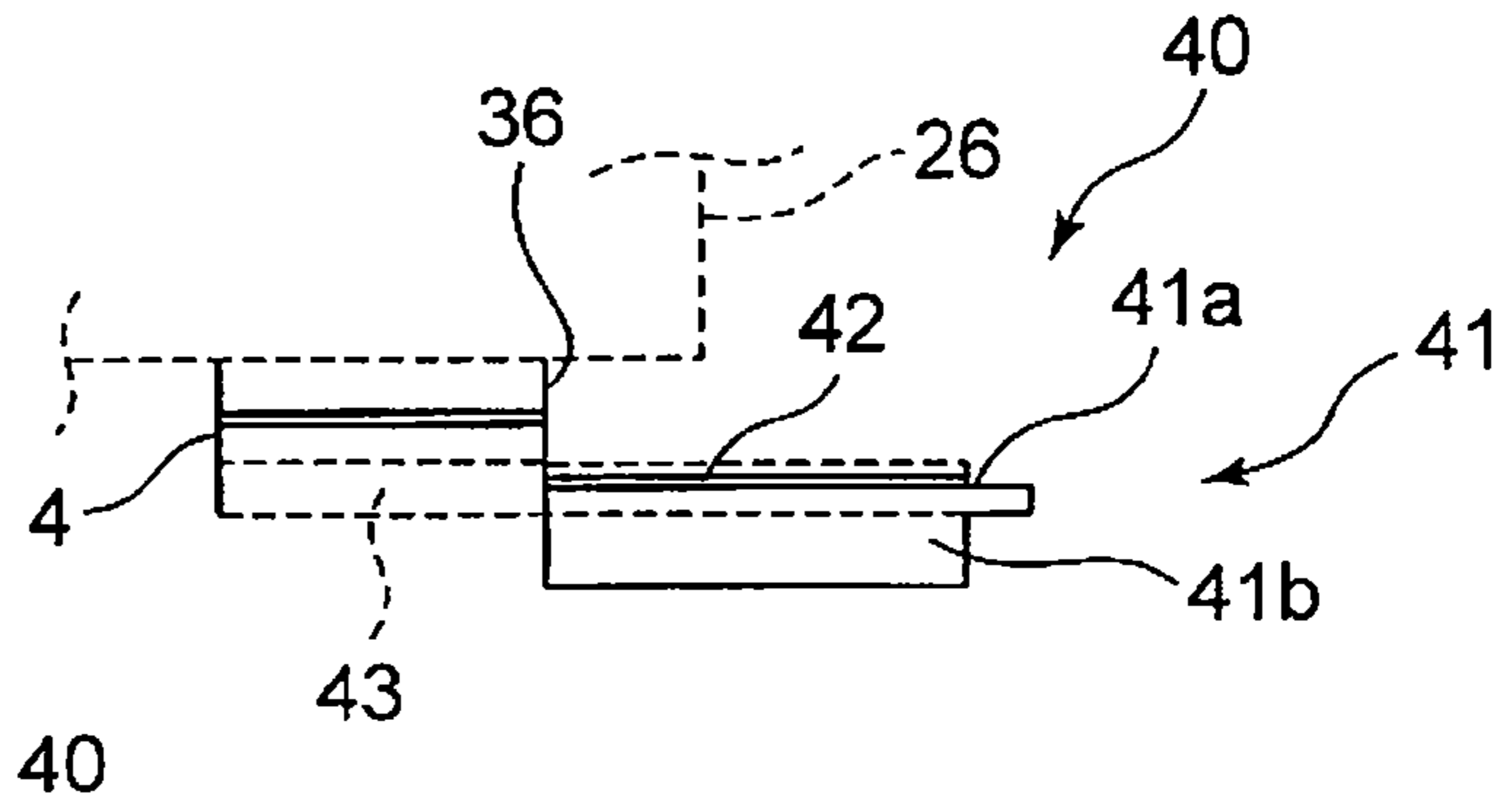


FIG. 7

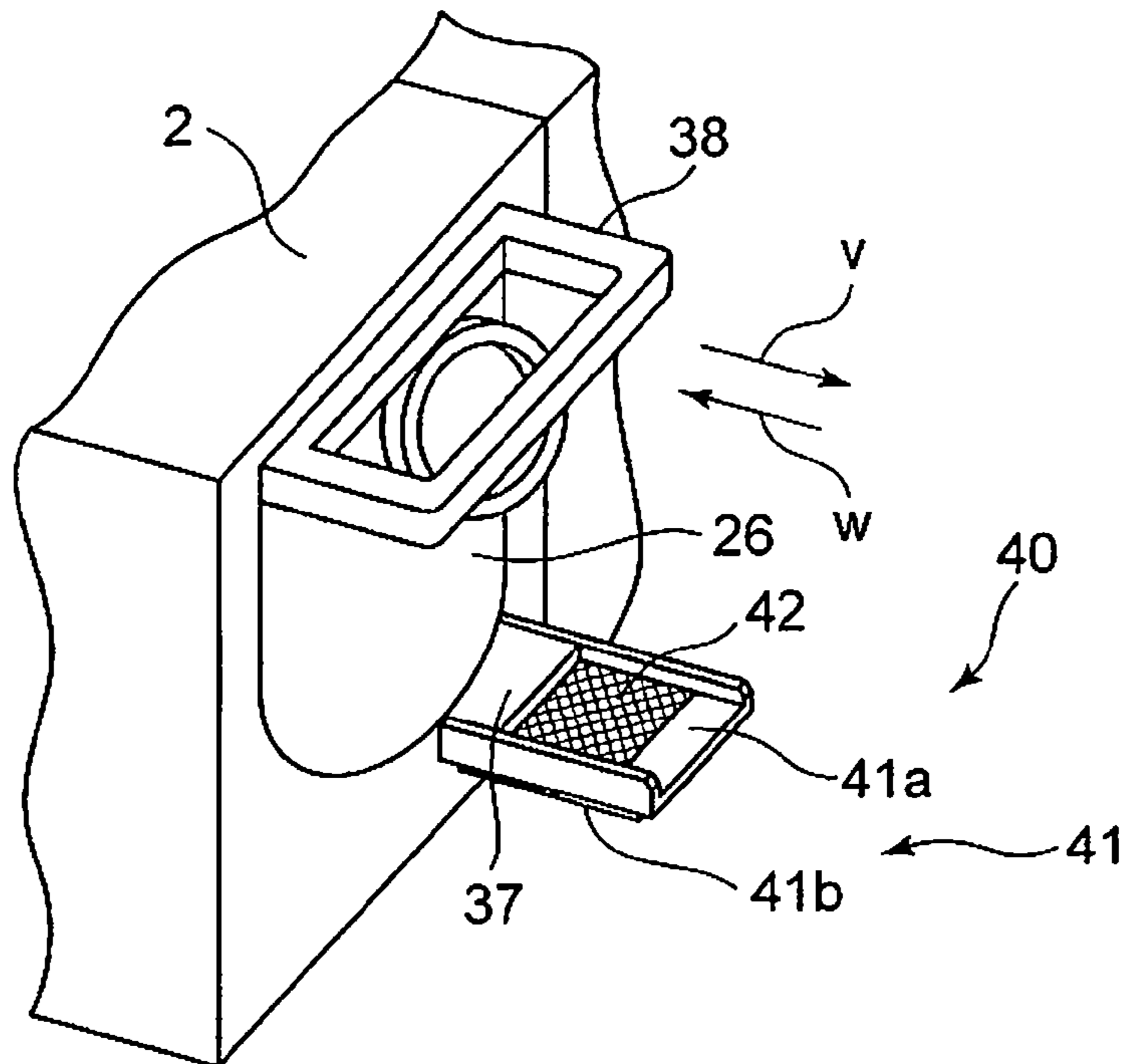


FIG. 8

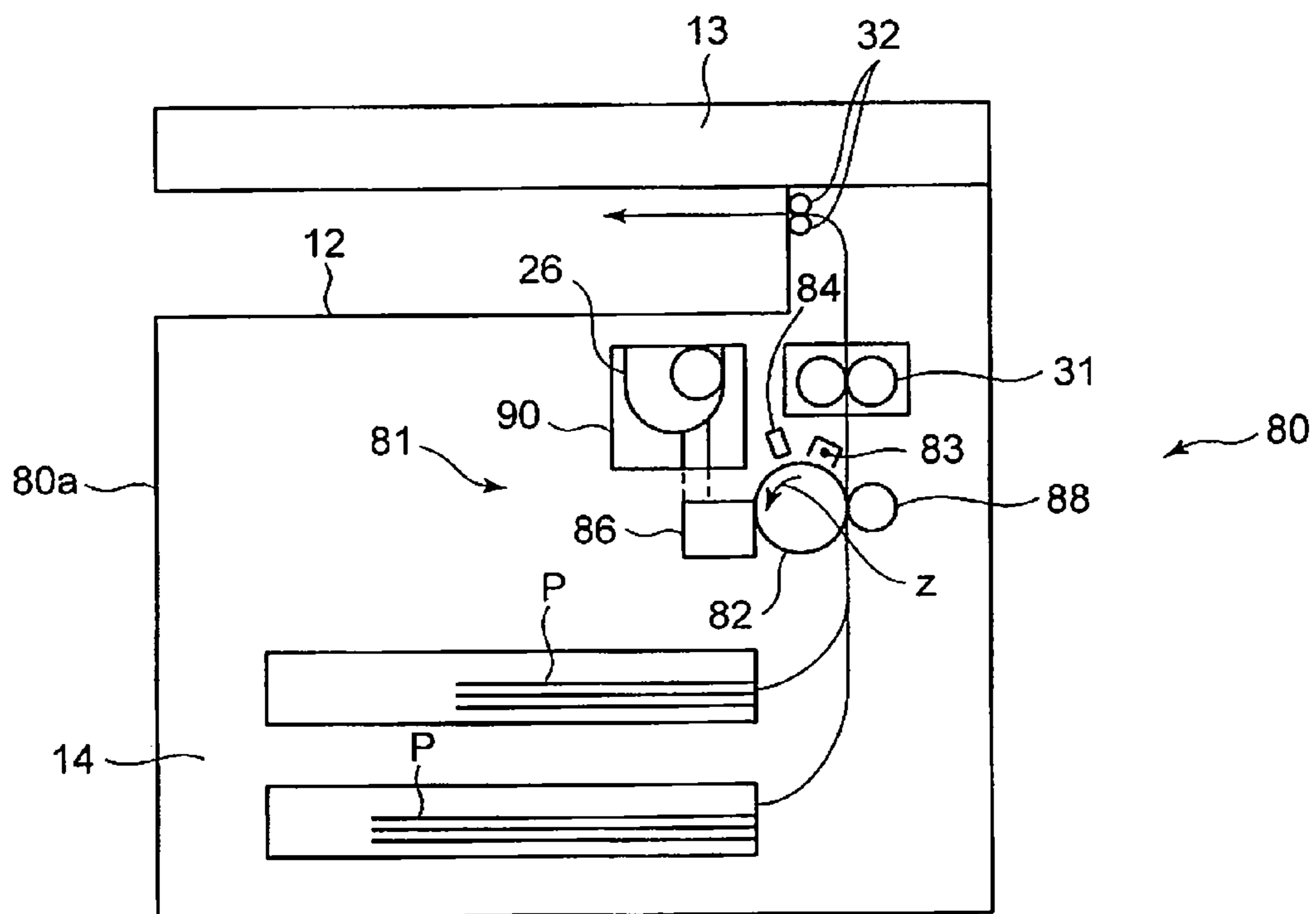


FIG. 9

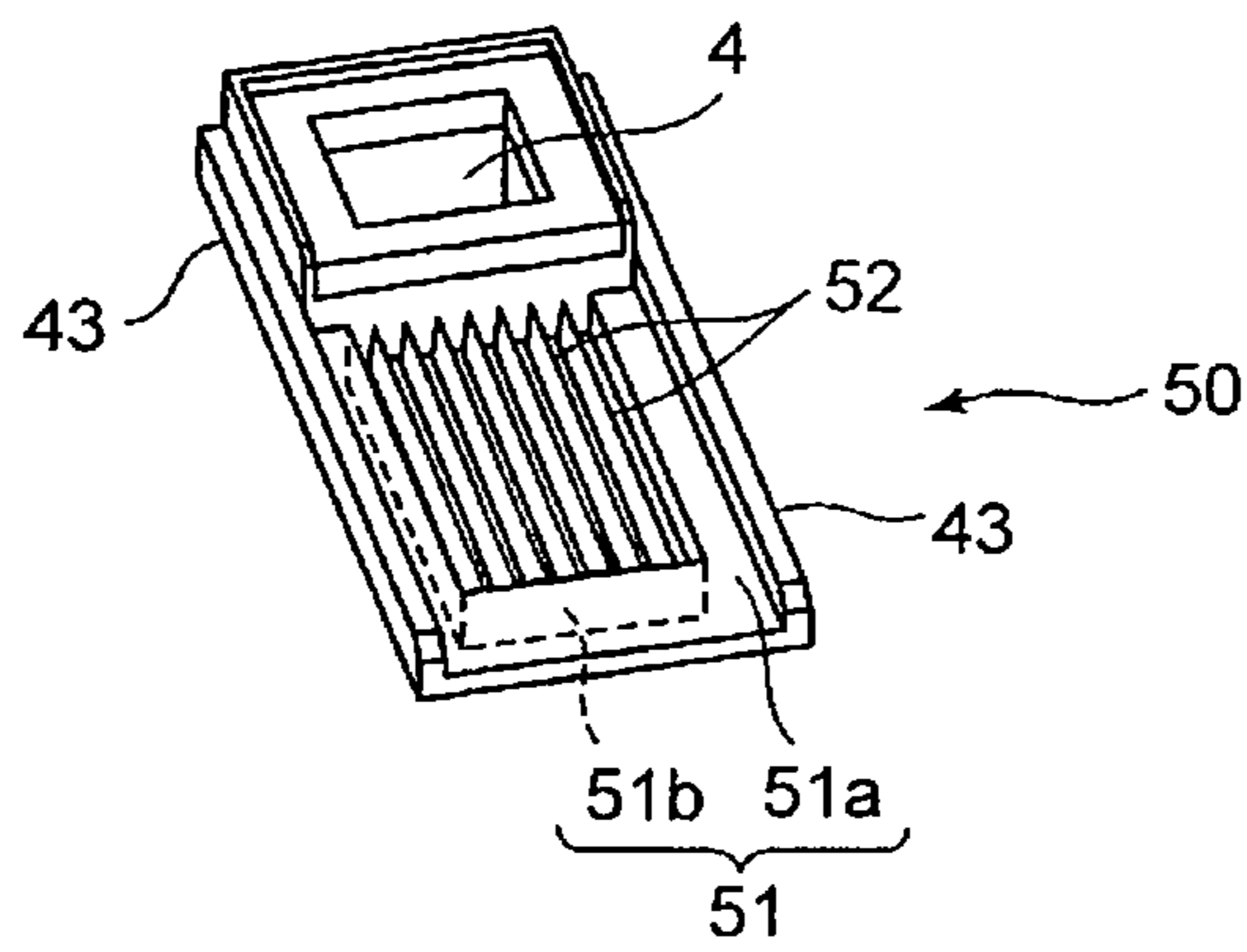


FIG. 10

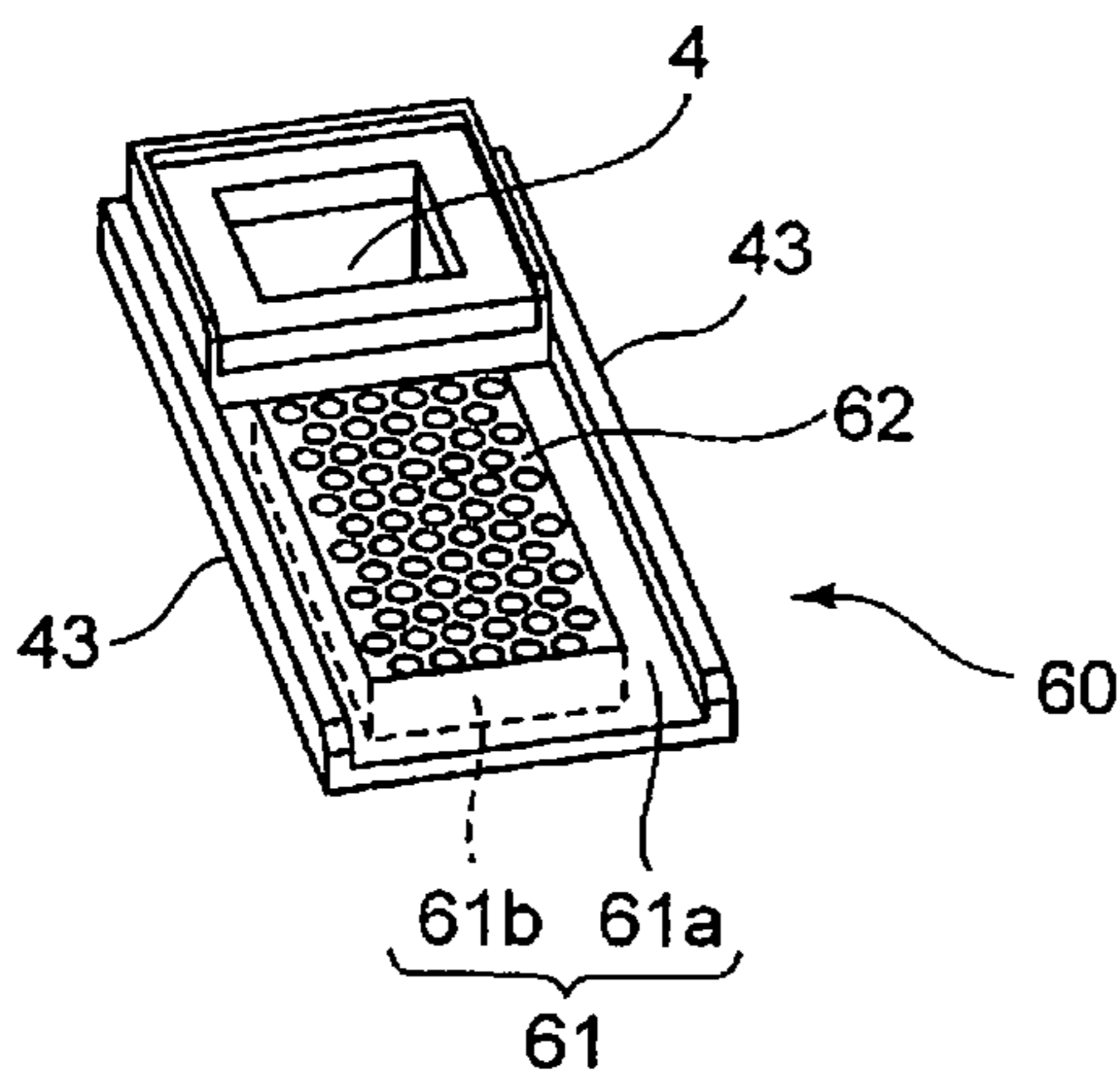
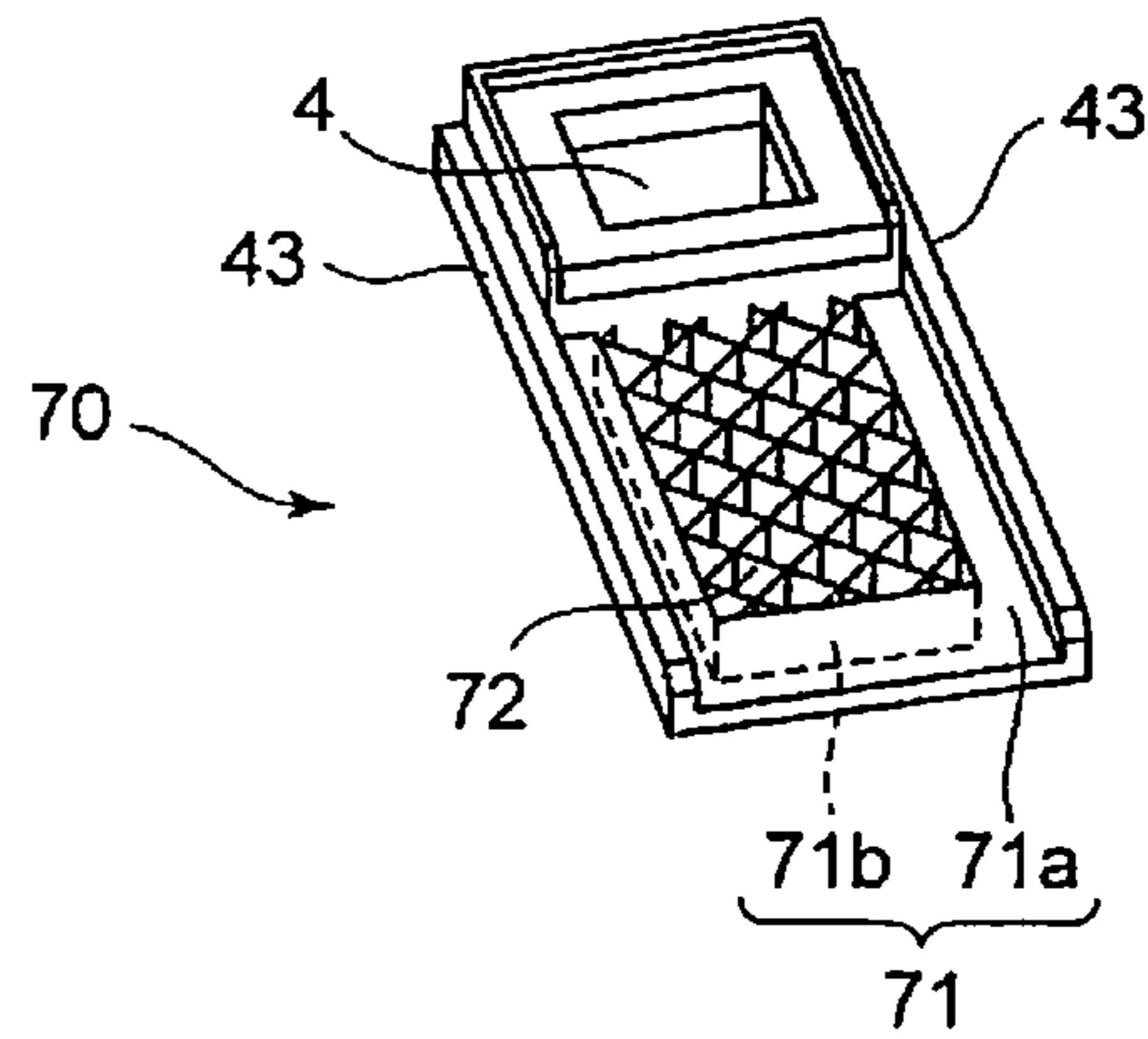


FIG. 11



1**IMAGE FORMING APPARATUS INCLUDING
TONER RECEIVER****CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATION**

This application is based upon and claims the benefit of priority from Provisional U.S. Application 61/406,994 filed on Oct. 26, 2010, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD

Embodiments described herein relate generally to an image forming apparatus, such as a copying machine or a printer, in which a toner cartridge to supply toner to a developing device is detached from and attached to an apparatus main body.

BACKGROUND

In a developing device of an image forming apparatus of electrophotographic system, such as a copying machine or a printer, there is an apparatus in which toner is supplied to the developing device by an attachable and detachable toner cartridge. Besides, there is an apparatus including a falling toner receiver to receive the toner spilled when a toner cartridge is attached to and detached from the image forming apparatus.

However, if the falling toner receiver is uncovered, there is a fear that during the attachment and detachment operation of the toner cartridge, an operator touches the toner collected in the falling toner receiver, and a large amount of toner adheres to the operator and contaminates the surroundings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic structural view showing an MFP of a first embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a schematic perspective view which a toner cartridge of the first embodiment is seen from below;

FIG. 3 is a partial schematic perspective view showing a cartridge box and a toner receiver of the first embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a schematic perspective view showing a state where the toner receiver of the first embodiment is disconnected from the cartridge box;

FIG. 5 is a schematic perspective view showing the toner receiver and a toner inflow port of the first embodiment;

FIG. 6 is a schematic side view showing the toner receiver and the toner inflow port of the first embodiment;

FIG. 7 is a schematic perspective view showing a state where the toner cartridge of the first embodiment is mounted to the cartridge box;

FIG. 8 is a schematic structural view showing an MFP of a second embodiment;

FIG. 9 is a schematic perspective view showing a toner inflow port and a toner receiver of the second embodiment;

FIG. 10 is a schematic perspective view showing a toner inflow port and a toner receiver of a first other example;

FIG. 11 is a schematic perspective view showing a toner inflow port and a toner receiver of a second other example.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In general, according to one embodiment, a toner receiver includes a tray that is located below a path through which a supply port of a supply container passes if the supply container mounted to a main body is removed from the main

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body, and includes a first surface close to the supply port and a toner sump recessed from the first surface; and a toner guard that includes an upper surface including a same height as the first surface and causes toner spilled from the supply port to pass from the first surface to the toner sump.

Hereinafter, embodiments will be described.

First Embodiment

FIG. 1 shows a color MFP (Multi Functional Peripheral) 10 as an image forming apparatus of a first embodiment. The MFP 10 includes, for example, a printer part 11 to form an image, a paper discharge part 12 to receive a sheet P discharged from the printer part 11, a scanner part 13 to read an image, and a paper feed part 14 to feed the sheet P.

The printer part 11 includes four sets of image forming stations 16Y, 16M, 16C and 16K of Y (yellow), M (magenta), C (cyan) and K (black), which are arranged in parallel along the lower side of an intermediate transfer belt 15. The image forming stations 16Y, 16M, 16C and 16K respectively include photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K as image carriers.

The respective image forming stations 16Y, 16M, 16C and 16K include chargers 18Y, 18M, 18C and 18K, developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K as developing parts, and photoconductive cleaners 21Y, 21M, 21C and 21K around the photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K rotating in an arrow m direction.

Primary transfer rollers 23Y, 23M, 23C and 23K are arranged at positions opposite to the photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K across the intermediate transfer belt 15. The respective primary transfer rollers 23Y, 23M, 23C and 23K primarily transfer toner images formed on the photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K to the intermediate transfer belt 15. The respective photoconductive cleaners 21Y, 21M, 21C and 21K remove and collect remaining toner on the photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K after the primary transfer.

A laser exposure device 22 irradiates exposure lights corresponding to the respective colors to the photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K between the chargers 18Y, 18M, 18C and 18K and the developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K. Electrostatic latent images are formed on the respective photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K by the irradiation of the respective exposure lights from the laser exposure device 22.

The respective developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K use two-component developer including toner and carrier, and supply the toner to the electrostatic latent images on the photoconductive drums 17Y, 17M, 17C and 17K to visualize the electrostatic latent images. The respective developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K uses the two-component developer including the toner of Y (yellow), M (magenta), C (cyan) and K (black) and the carrier, and develops the images.

A housing 1 of the MFP 10 as a main body includes a cartridge box 2 to and from which toner cartridges 26Y, 26M, 26C and 26K as supply containers are attached and detached, which is located above the respective developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K. The respective toner cartridges 26Y, 26M, 26C and 26K mounted to the cartridge box 2 respectively contain toners of Y (yellow), M (magenta), C (cyan) and K (black). If the toner densities of the respective developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K are decreased, the respective toner cartridges 26Y, 26M, 26C and 26K supply a necessary amount of toner to the respective developing devices 20Y, 20M, 20C and 20K.

The intermediate transfer belt **15** is stretched between a backup roller **27** and a driven roller **28**, and rotates in an arrow n direction. A secondary transfer roller **30** is opposite to a secondary transfer position of the intermediate transfer belt **15** supported by the backup roller **27**. A specified secondary transfer bias is applied to between the backup roller **27** and the secondary transfer roller **30**. Toner images on the intermediate transfer belt **15** are collectively secondarily transferred onto the sheet P passing through between the intermediate transfer belt **15** and the secondary transfer roller **30**.

The printer part **11** includes a fixing device **31** and a paper discharge roller **32** at the downstream side of the secondary transfer roller **30** along the conveyance direction of the sheet P. The fixing device **31** fixes the toner image transferred to the sheet P by the secondary transfer part to the sheet P. The paper discharge roller **32** discharges the sheet P having the fixed toner image to the paper discharge part **12**.

The toner cartridges **26Y**, **26M**, **26C** and **26K** have the same structure although the contained toners are different. Next, the structures of the toner cartridges **26Y**, **26M**, **26C** and **26K** will be described with reference to FIG. 2 while common reference numerals are used. As shown in FIG. 2, a toner cartridge **26** includes a toner supply port **36** at the front side. The toner cartridge **26** includes a shutter **37** to open and close the toner supply port **36**. In the operation of mounting the toner cartridge **26** to the cartridge box **2**, the shutter **37** opens the toner supply port **36** by contact with an after-mentioned hook **3b**. In the operation of removing the toner cartridge **26** from the cartridge box **2**, the shutter **37** closes the toner supply port **36** by a spring **37b** provided in a shutter support part **37a**. The toner cartridge **26** includes a handle **38** for attaching and detaching the toner receiver **26** to and from the cartridge box **2**.

As shown in FIG. 3, the cartridge box **2** includes a toner inflow port **4** in the bottom of a cartridge containing part **3**. A hook **3b** to slide the shutter **37** of the toner cartridge **26** is provided on the side surface of the cartridge containing part **3**. For example, if the user mounts the toner cartridge **26** to the cartridge box **2** along a guide rail **3a**, the shutter **37** contacts the hook **3b** and slides in an arrow f direction. The toner supply port **36** of the toner cartridge **26** is opened, and the toner supply port **36** communicates with the toner inflow port **4**. The toner in the cartridge box **2** is supplied from the toner supply port **36** through the toner inflow port **4** to the developing devices **20Y**, **20M**, **20C** and **20K**.

If the user removes the toner cartridge **26** along the guide rail **3a** from the cartridge box **2**, the shutter **37** slides in an arrow r direction by the spring **37b** and closes the toner supply port **36**. If the toner cartridge **26** is removed from the cartridge box **2**, the toner adhered to the periphery of the toner supply port **36** is prevented from spilling.

A toner receiver **40** is arranged at a position adjacent to the toner inflow port **4** at the front side of the cartridge box **2** and below a path through which the toner supply port **36** of the toner cartridge **26** passes if the toner cartridge **26** is attached to and detached from the cartridge box **2**. The toner receiver **40** can be attached to and detached from the cartridge box **2**. The toner receiver **40** includes a tray **41** and a mesh **42** to cover the tray **41**, which is a toner guard.

As shown in FIG. 4, the toner receiver **40** includes a stay **43** for fixing to the cartridge box **2**. The toner receiver **40** is guided by a tray guide **45** formed in the cartridge box **2**, and is mounted to the cartridge box **2**. A fastening part **43a** of a leading edge of the stay **43** is fastened to a fixing part **4a** formed at the rear side of the toner inflow port **4**, and the toner receiver **40** is fixed to the cartridge box **2**.

If a toner sump has a capacity capable of collecting the toner spilled from the toner cartridge **26**, the toner receiver may be fixed to the cartridge box. Further, the position of the toner supply port **36** of the toner cartridge **26** is not limited to the front side.

As shown in FIGS. 4 to 6, the tray **41** of the toner receiver **40** includes a tray surface **41a** as a first surface close to the toner supply port **36** of the toner cartridge **26** mounted to the cartridge box **2** and a toner sump **41b** formed to be recessed from the tray surface **41a**. The mesh **42** covers the tray surface **41a**. The roughness of the mesh **42** is such that even if a finger of a user who performs the attachment and detachment operation of the toner cartridge **26** touches the tray **41**, the finger can be prevented from touching the toner sump **41b**.

The toner spilled from the toner supply port **36** to the toner receiver **40** if the toner cartridge **26** is attached to and detached from the cartridge box **2** does not stay on the tray surface **41a** but passes through the mesh **42** and is collected in the toner sump **41b**.

If toner is supplied to the developing devices **20Y**, **20M**, **20C** and **20K** during printing and the toner cartridge **26** becomes empty, for example, the user replaces the toner cartridge **26**. As shown in FIG. 7, the user pulls the empty cartridge **26** in an arrow v direction, and removes the toner cartridge **26** from the cartridge box **2**. In the operation of removing the toner cartridge **26** from the cartridge box **2**, the shutter **37** slides in the arrow r direction by the spring **37b** and closes the toner supply port **36**.

If the toner cartridge **26** is removed, the toner can spill from the periphery of the toner supply port **36**. However, even if the toner spills from the periphery of the toner supply port **36**, the spilled toner is received by the toner receiver **40** below the path through which the toner supply port **36** passes. Further, the toner received by the toner receiver **40** passes through the mesh **42** covering the tray surface **41a** and is collected in the toner sump **41b**. The toner spilled from the periphery of the toner supply port **36** is not deposited on the tray surface **41a**.

Next, the user slides a new toner cartridge **26** along the guide rail **3a** of the cartridge containing part **3** in an arrow w direction of FIG. 7, mounts the toner cartridge to the cartridge box **2**, and completes the replacement operation of the toner cartridge **26**. Even if the user touches the tray **41** during the replacement operation of the toner cartridge **26**, since the mesh **42** guards the upper part of the toner sump **41b**, the user merely touches the surface of the mesh **42** on which toner is not deposited, and does not touch the toner sump **41b** in which toner is deposited. The mesh **42** can suppress the amount of toner adhered to the user.

For example, if a large amount of toner erroneously spills to the toner receiver **40** and the toner sump **41b** becomes full, the user removes the toner receiver **41** from the cartridge box **2**, and the user sweeps away the toner collected in the toner sump **41b**. The user disconnects the fastening part **43a** of the leading edge of the stay **43** from the fixing part **4a**, and pulls out the toner receiver **40** in an arrow x direction of FIG. 4. The user sweeps away the toner collected in the toner sump **41b** of the toner receiver **40** pulled out from the cartridge box **2**. The user sweeps away the collected toner, slides the cleaned toner receiver **40** in an arrow y direction along the tray guide **45**, and fixes the toner receiver to the cartridge box **2**.

According to the first embodiment, in the color MFP **10**, the tray surface **41a** of the toner receiver **40** is covered with the mesh **42**, and the user is prevented from touching the toner collected in the toner sump **41b**. During the replacement operation of the toner cartridge **26**, the user does not touch the toner sump **41b** in which toner is collected, and the amount of toner adhered to the user can be suppressed. If the toner sump

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41b becomes full, the user removes the toner receiver 41 from the cartridge box 2, and the user sweeps away the collected toner. The toner collected in the toner sump 41b can be easily removed if necessary.

Second Embodiment

Next, a second embodiment will be described. In the second embodiment, a toner receiver is provided in a cartridge box of, for example, a monochrome MFP. In the second embodiment, the same component as the component described in the first embodiment is denoted by the same reference numeral, and its detailed description is omitted. In the toner receiver of the second embodiment, a toner guard is arranged in a toner sump.

A printer part 81 of a monochrome MFP 80 shown in FIG. 8, which is an image forming apparatus of the second embodiment, includes a charger 83, an exposure device 84, a developing device 86 and a transfer device 88 around a single photoconductive drum 82 rotating in an arrow z direction. The charger 83 uniformly charges the photoconductive drum 82, and the exposure device 84 irradiates exposure light and forms an electrostatic latent image on the photoconductive drum 82. The developing device 86 uses two-component developer including, for example, K (black) toner and carrier, and supplies the toner to the electrostatic latent image on the photoconductive drum 82 to visualize the electrostatic latent image. The transfer device 88 transfers a toner image formed on the photoconductive drum 82 onto a sheet P.

A housing 80a of the MFP 80 as a main body includes a cartridge box 90 to and from which a toner cartridge 26 is attached and detached in the upper part of the developing device 86. The toner cartridge 26 containing k (black) toner is mounted to the cartridge box 90, and supplies the K (black) toner to the developing device 86.

A toner receiver 50 shown in FIG. 9 is arranged at a position adjacent to a toner inflow port 4 and below a path through which a toner supply port 36 of the toner cartridge 26 passes. In the toner receiver 50, many thin plate-like guards 52 as toner guards are formed in parallel in a toner sump 51b which is formed to be recessed from a tray surface 51a. The upper end of the guard 52 has the same height as the tray surface 51a. An interval between the plural guards 52 is such that a finger of a user who performs the attachment and detachment operation of the toner cartridge 26 can be prevented from touching the toner sump 51b. A tray 51 and the guards 52 are integrally formed of, for example, synthetic resin.

The toner spilled from the periphery of the toner supply port 36 of the toner cartridge 26 to the toner receiver 50 does not stay on the tray surface 51a, but passes through the gaps of the plural guards 52 to the toner sump 51b. Even if the user touches the upper end of the guard 52, on which toner is not deposited, during the replacement operation of the toner cartridge 26, the user is prevented by the guard 52 and does not touch the toner sump 51b in which the toner is deposited.

Incidentally, the toner guards arranged in the toner sump 51b are not limited to thin plate-like ones. For example, as in a first other example shown in FIG. 10, a guard 62 is formed in a tray 61 of a toner receiver 60 provided adjacently to a toner inflow port 4 while leaving many hole-like toner sumps 61b. The upper end of the guard 62 has the same height as a tray surface 61a. The guard 62 prevents a finger of a user who performs the attachment and detachment operation of the toner cartridge 26 from entering the hole-like toner sumps 61b. The tray 61 and the guard 62 are integrally formed of, for example, synthetic resin.

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Further, as in a second other example shown in FIG. 11, the toner guard arranged in the toner sump is made a lattice guard 72. The upper end of the guard 72 is made to have the same height as a tray surface 71a. The roughness of the lattice of the guard 72 is such an interval that a finger of a user who performs the attachment and detachment operation of the toner cartridge 26 can be prevented from touching a toner sump 71b. For example, the guard 72 is formed separately from a tray 71, and the guard 72 is fitted in the toner sump 71b to form the toner receiver 70.

According to the second embodiment, in the monochrome MFP 80, the guard 52 is formed in the toner sump 51b of the toner receiver 50. Similarly to the first embodiment, during the replacement operation of the toner cartridge 26, the guard 52 prevents the user from touching the toner sump 51b, and the amount of toner adhered to the user is suppressed.

According to at least one of the embodiments, the worker does not touch the collected toner during the replacement operation of the supply container, and the toner adhered to the worker is decreased.

While certain embodiments have been described these embodiments have been presented by way of example only, and are not intended to limit the scope of the inventions. Indeed, the novel apparatus and methods described herein may be embodied in a variety of other forms: furthermore various omissions, substitutions and changes in the form of the apparatus and methods described herein may be made without departing from the spirit of the inventions. The accompanying claims and their equivalents are intended to cover such forms of modifications as would fall within the scope and spirit of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A toner receiver comprising:

35 a tray that is located below a path through which a supply port of a supply container passes if the supply container mounted to a main body is removed from the main body, and includes a first surface close to the supply port and a toner sump recessed from the first surface; and

40 a toner guard that includes an upper surface including a same height as the first surface and causes toner spilled from the supply port to pass from the first surface to the toner sump.

45 2. The toner receiver of claim 1, wherein the toner guard includes a roughness to prevent an operator of the supply container from touching the toner sump.

3. The toner receiver of claim 1, wherein the toner guard is a mesh arranged on the first surface.

4. The toner receiver of claim 1, wherein the toner guard is a partition extending from the first surface to the toner sump.

5. The toner receiver of claim 1, wherein the tray and the toner guard are integrally formed.

6. The toner receiver of claim 1, wherein the tray can be attached to and detached from the main body.

55 7. An image forming apparatus comprising:
a developing device to develop an electrostatic latent image formed on an image carrier;

a supply container to supply toner to the developing device;
a tray that is located below a path through which a supply port of the supply container passes if the supply container mounted to a main body is removed from the main body, and includes a first surface close to the supply port and a toner sump recessed from the first surface; and

65 a toner guard that includes an upper surface including a same height as the first surface and causes toner spilled from the supply port to pass from the first surface to the toner sump.

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8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the toner guard includes a roughness to prevent an operator of the supply container from touching the toner sump.

9. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the toner guard is a mesh arranged on the first surface. 5

10. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the toner guard is a partition extending from the first surface to the toner sump.

11. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the apparatus is a color image forming apparatus comprising a plurality of the developing devices, and the tray is arranged below each of a plurality of paths through which supply ports of a plurality of the supply containers to supply the toner to the plurality of the developing devices pass. 10

12. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the apparatus is a monochrome image forming apparatus comprising the one developing device. 15

13. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the tray and the toner guard are integrally formed.

14. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the tray can be attached to and detached from the main body.

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15. A toner receiving method comprising:
removing a supply container mounted to a main body from the main body;

receiving toner falling from a supply port by a first surface close to the supply port at a place below a path through which the supply port of the supply container passes; and

collecting the toner received by the first surface to a toner sump that is recessed from the first surface, is far from the supply port as compared with the first surface and has no possibility that an operator of the supply container touches.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the toner sump is prevented by a toner guard from being touched by the operator. 15

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the toner guard is a mesh covering a surface of the toner sump.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the toner guard is a partition formed in the toner sump.

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